

## Make it a Green Holiday!

From Thanksgiving to New Year's Day household waste increases more than 25 percent, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Make it a green holiday season, and think before you shop, wrap, decorate and throw parties!

### **That's a Wrap**

- Gift wrapping comprises much of the increased waste during the holiday season. Get creative and use newspaper, maps, posters, coloring book pages, or fabric remnants you may have lying around the house. If purchasing wrapping paper, buy recycled paper, and avoid the foil or metallic kind, as it is not recyclable.
- Instead of purchasing boxes and gift bags that are used once, try to using things like baskets, old tins, hat boxes, cloth bags, or even brown paper bags that you decorate.
- You can use scarves or bandanas as tissue paper, or buy some beautiful wash clothes or towels and make them part of the gift.
- For ribbon, use yarn or twine, or make your own with dried vines or slivers of a palm frond. Decorate your package with leaves or flowers you find in your garden.
- Save the front of all your holiday cards each year, and use them as your gift tags.

### **Gifts for a Good Earth**

- Consider useful gifts that will not end up in the attic or in the back closet. The best way to accomplish this is by asking family and friends to make a wish list of things they need or would enjoy having.
- Give gifts that benefit the environment, like fair trade goods, a compost bin, a bird feeder, a membership to an environmental organization, or items made from recycled or organic materials. Include a card that highlights what is special about your gift, so you pass on the knowledge as well.
- Consider gifts without packaging such as certificates for massages, a day of sailing, or fly fishing lessons. You can make your own gift certificate for a special dinner, pet sitting, house cleaning, gardening, or any other gift of time or talent you have to offer.
- If giving electronics, consider buying rechargeable batteries and a charger to add to the gift. Rechargeable batteries can last hundreds of hours longer than single use batteries.

### **Trimming the Tree**

- Choose LED lights for the tree and keep the lights on only when you're there to enjoy them.
- Trees can be recycled to create mulch by placing them roadside ... just be sure to remove all the tinsel, garland and any other foreign objects (consider using less tinsel or an alternative to save yourself time later).

### **Thoughtful Feasting**

- Don't throw that food away, instead have some extra plastic containers and send leftovers home with guests or donate to a local food bank.
- Avoid paper plates, plastic cups and especially Styrofoam disposables, by using washable plates and linens for your holiday parties and meals.
- Recycle extra aluminum foil and cans that come with holiday feasts.

### **The Party's Over**

- After all the presents are opened, consider passing on your old toys, electronics, clothes and other items to non-profit resale stores, or use E-bay, Freecycle, or Craig's List to find them a new home.
- If you're unable to pass on your cell phones or other electronics, make sure that you bring them to St. Lucie County's Recycling Facility (see [http://www.stlucieco.gov/solid\\_waste/index.htm](http://www.stlucieco.gov/solid_waste/index.htm)).. DO NOT throw them in your regular trash as they contain hazardous materials that need to be handled separately to avoid air, soil, or ground water contamination.
- Save your boxes, bows, and cards for next year and do your part to extend the life of our natural resources.
- Be sure to collect and recycle your cardboard and wrapping paper (only the non-metallic kind). Send any packing nuts or materials to packing and mailing companies for re-use.